

ARDENT SPIRITS—NAVY.

[To accompany bill H. R. No. 522.]

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LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY,

*In relation to the use of ardent spirits.*

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JUNE 10, 1834.

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NAVY DEPARTMENT, May 2, 1834.

SIR : Your letter of the 30th ultimo, enclosing resolutions as to the use of ardent spirits in the navy, and establishing a naval depot at Charleston, South Carolina, has been received.

In respect to the resolution concerning ardent spirits, a report containing, among other things, a revision of the laws on the naval ration, has been made by the board appointed for that purpose.

That report contains views on the subject of abolishing the spirit part of the naval ration, which meet with my approbation.

The President probably will transmit it to Congress this day, and for details on this point I ask permission to refer to its contents, merely adding that, soon after taking charge of this department, I issued an order authorizing seamen to commute the spirit part of their ration for money, and valued it so high as to furnish a strong inducement to them to make the exchange.

Finding the component parts of the navy ration, unlike those of the army, fixed by law, it was not in my power to diminish or abolish it; but I invited the attention of Congress to a revision of the subject, and have hoped that some salutary changes would, at an early day, be provided for.

Under the order before mentioned, very great improvements in temperance, health, and morals, appear to have occurred; and should the alterations be made, and the discretion conferred, recommended in the above report, I feel convinced their effects on the naval establishment will prove beneficial.

The character and habits of seamen are so peculiar, that a gradual, rather than sudden change is supposed to be most acceptable, and that,

under the authority proposed in the report, a total abolition of the use of spirits can, ere long, be introduced, if not with the entire consent and approbation of all concerned, yet without any danger of creating dissatisfaction or injury in the public service.

I shall submit a separate reply to the other resolution.

I am, very respectfully,

Sir, your obedient servant,

LEVI WOODBURY.

The Hon. CAMPBELL P. WHITE,

*Chairman of Naval Committee, Ho. of Reps.*